

ADMINISTRATIVE - INTERNAL USE ONLY

3 April 1978

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MEMORANDUM NO. 20-31-44

SUBJECT : Environmental Differentials Payable to Wage Employees

RESCISSION: OPM 20-31-24 dated 2 March 1971

1. Policy

a. It is Agency policy to follow, to the extent practicable, Federal regulations governing the payment of environmental differentials to wage employees for exposure to various degrees of hazards, physical hardships, and working conditions of an unusually severe nature.

b. Agency components are required to take action to achieve the objective of eliminating or reducing to the lowest level possible all hazards, physical hardships and working conditions of an unusually severe nature.

c. Environmental pay differentials will be authorized when exposure to hazards, physical hardships and working conditions of an unusually severe nature could result in significant injury, illness or death, or cause significant distress or discomfort, and only to the extent that such exposures and work situations are consistent with the categories listed in the schedule of environmental differentials.

2. Entitlements and Limitations

a. A wage employee who is exposed to a situation for which an environmental differential is authorized is entitled to the appropriate differential irrespective of whether the employee has a full-time, part-time or intermittent tour of duty; regular assignment or on detail; or is serving under a temporary or permanent appointment.

b. An environmental differential will not be authorized for a wage employee whose exposure to a hazard, physical hardship or working condition of an unusually severe nature has been a factor in establishing the grade of the job.

c. An environmental pay differential may be authorized under the schedule of differentials either on the basis of actual exposure measurable in hours and minutes (Part I), or on the basis of all paid hours in a calendar day (Part II). For an employee to receive a differential either under Part I or Part II of the schedule there must be actual exposure to the environmental condition.

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d. When an employee is entitled to an environmental differential, which is paid on an actual exposure basis, a minimum of one hour's differential pay for the exposure must be paid. For exposure beyond one hour, the employee will be paid in one-quarter hour increments and for any portion thereof.

e. An employee subjected to more than one hazard, physical hardship or working conditions of an unusually severe nature at the same time will be paid for the exposure which results in the highest differential, but will not be paid more than one differential for the same hours of work.

f. The amount of the differential to which the employee is entitled is determined by multiplying the percentage rate authorized for the described exposure by the second rate for grade WG-10 on the regular non-supervisory wage schedule for the area.

g. Environmental differentials will not be approved on a retroactive basis.

h. An environmental differential is included as part of the employee's basic rate of pay and will be used to compute premium pay (overtime, holiday or Sunday work), the amount from which retirement deductions are made, and the amount on which group life insurance is based.

3. Responsibilities

a. Operating Officials and supervisory personnel are responsible for:

(1) Recognizing conditions and situations of employees for which an environmental differential is payable under one of the categories listed in the schedule of environmental differentials.

(2) Submitting requests for payment of environmental differentials through the appropriate Deputy Director or Head of Independent Office to the Director of Personnel for approval.


(3) Certifying on attachments to time and attendance reports as to the frequency and duration of employee exposures to hazards, physical hardship and working conditions of an unusually severe nature for which an environmental differential has been approved, in accordance with the categories listed in the schedule.

b. The Director of Personnel will approve requests for payment of environmental differentials that are consistent with the categories and differential rates listed in the schedule of environmental differentials.

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4. Schedule of Environmental Differentials

The schedule of environmental differentials defines the categories of hazards, physical hardships and working conditions of an unusually severe nature for which the differentials are payable. The schedule also includes the differential rate for each category. The examples given are illustrative only and are not necessarily inclusive of all exposures which may be consistent with the conditions given in the category definitions. Copies of the schedule may be obtained from the Position Management and Compensation Division, Office of Personnel.


F. W. M. Janney
Director of Personnel

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